

Geographic variation as a window on probabilistic individual grammars

Present-day Dutch has a vestigial partitive genitive morpheme. Adjectives take the genitive *-s* morpheme when they are used as a dependent of a quantifier (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 863; Broekhuis 2013: 420-426). This is illustrated in (1). The construction comes in two variants: either with an overt *-s* suffix, or without the suffix.

- (1) *iets* *bijzonder(-s)*
 something special-GEN
 ‘something special’

While the two variants do not show any observable semantic difference, Pijpops & Van de Velde (2014) applied mixed-model logistic regression and found that the expression of the *-s* is probabilistically determined by a number of factors. While overall, the [+s] variant is more frequent, the [-s] variant is also fairly common, and is more likely to occur (i) in informal registers, (ii) in low-frequency phrases, and (iii) in the south of the language area (Belgium). There also is a strong main effect for the [-s] variant for adjectives that occurred in superficially similar non-partitive constructions. This is illustrated in (2) and (3): though similar in surface form, the contexts makes clear that (2) is not a partitive construction. The absence of the *-s* morpheme then spills over to genuine partitives like (3) (see Pijpops & Van de Velde, *forthc.* for extensive explanation on what they call ‘constructional contamination’).

- (2) *iets* *verkeerd* *geïnterpreteerd*
 [something]_{NP} [[wrongly]_{AdvP} interpreted]

- (3) *iets* *verkeerd* *gegeten*
 [something] wrong]_{NP} eaten

This suggests that, in line with exemplar-based theories of language, prior use of constructions leaves a (context-rich) trail in the mind of the language users.

In this talk, we want to see whether the same effect also occurs with regard to the regional variable. Can the regional provenance of the lexemes inserted in a construction exert an influence on the morphological realisation of the target construction, even if the construction is used by language users with a different regiolectal background? In our study southern speakers have a stronger tendency to drop the genitive *-s*, but less so when they are using ‘northern’ lexemes, and vice versa. This effect holds even if the regional provenance of the lexemes is subtle, and unlikely to be a shibboleth of a regionally recognisable type of speech. Furthermore, we see that while the analogical pull of lexemes with a regional profile is felt everywhere in the language area, the effect is more blurry in cities near the border of the two regions and more clear in the core areas. This finding shows that not only the language-internal context of prior instances is stored in memory, but the ‘language-external’, lectal context as well.

Broekhuis, H. 2013. *Syntax of Dutch: Adjectives and adjective phrases*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Haeseryn, W., et al.. 1997. *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst*. Groningen: Nijhoff.

Pijpops, D. & F. Van de Velde. Forthcoming, 2016. ‘Constructional contamination: How does it work and how do we measure it?’. *Folia Linguistica* 50.

Pijpops D. & F. Van de Velde. 2014. ‘A multivariate analysis of the partitive genitive in Dutch. Bringing quantitative data into a theoretical discussion’. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory* (ahead of print).